

Whirlaway Drive woman complains of acetone in well

Warminster: The acetone was discovered by testing done by the U.S. Navy. Officials say the acetone probably was introduced during testing. But the resident, Marie Morton, is worried.

By James F. Duffy
Staff Writer

Marie Morton, a resident of Whirlaway Drive in the Flying Heels development in Warminster still has a problem.

Her home is still within the boundaries of well-testing by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Naval Air Warfare Center for toxins believed to have migrated in the aquifer from eight sites on NAWC property.

The most recent test to Morton's well found trace elements of acetone, an organic solvent. Previous testing had shown trace levels of 111 TCA, a volatile organic compound.

While homes in the Casey Village development and Kirk Road in Warminster are being connected to municipal water due to high levels of contamination by trichloroethene (TCE) and tetrachloroethene (PCE), known carcinogens, Flying Heels is not which has Morton worried.

"The TCA did not show up on my last test but I think heavy rains affected that," she said. "The test result this time showed acetone but with a 'B' next to it, which means it was probably introduced in the lab."

EPA Environmental Scientist Darius Ostrauskas said according to Halliburton NUS, the lab the Navy is using, the acetone was introduced in the lab.

"Much of the glassware used in the lab is rinsed with acetone and residuals can be left. The levels may be low but they may be picked up by the testing," he said. "The levels in the test can be introduced through the glassware used to collect the sample or used to produce the sample."

Morton said acetone was one of the elements the labs were looking for. It didn't make sense to her it would be introduced in the lab.

"If the lab is contaminated, I don't know how I can trust a contaminated lab," she said. "I can't

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understand how they could say this test was accurate."

Ostrauskas said he talked to Morton and told her the level of residual acetone detected was over 100 times below levels that are harmful for human consumption.

"The main point is the acetone detected was likely residuals introduced in the lab," he said. "But if it was in the water, the levels fall well below federal standards and would not present a problem."

Morton said she talked to two other private labs, Analytical Laboratories in Telford and QC Inc., in Southampton.

"They said if acetone was introduced in the lab they felt the test would not be accurate enough," she said. "If it did occur in their labs, they would do a new round of sampling."

Maryann Fedock, president of Analytical Laboratories said it is possible that acetone contamination can occur in the lab.

"You have to be very careful," she said. "Without a duplicate sample or a resample, you can't be sure if the contamination came from the lab or the well sample."

Fedock said if such contamination occurred in her lab, they would do a re-sampling of the well to make sure the results had not been tainted.

Tom Hines, vice-president of QC Inc. said the air in any lab has to be monitored to avoid "cross contamination."

"Acetone is used in labs as a drying agent and is also used for washing glassware. It's fairly common," he said. "If a sample was found to have an abnormally high level, we would investigate further."

Ostrauskas said the EPA has requested that the Navy retest Morton's well.

"Mrs. Morton still has many questions as to exactly what is in her well," he said. "I think it is prudent for the Navy to retest the well in the short term to answer those questions."

Ostrauskas said the Navy and the EPA are "actively pursuing" a long term monitoring plan for Flying Heels as well as Casey Village and Kirk Road.

"The results of previous testing in the area as well as preliminary results from the latest round of testing have consistently stated the well water in the Flying Heels area is safe to drink according to federal standards and crite-

ria," he said. "The Restoration Advisory Board will be meeting with township officials and residents to work on the long term monitoring plan."

Ostrauskas said the next meeting of the Restoration Advisory Board will take place 9 a.m. April 28 at the Lady Luck Club on the NAWC Base.

Morton said long term testing isn't good enough.

"I don't care who is responsible but the Environmental Protection Agency should live up to their name and not worry about remuneration," she said. "I think they're telling us now what they told Casey Village 14 years ago, I don't want to take any chances."

Morton said during the last meeting she attended on the issue with the Navy and the EPA Harry Tyndall of Jacksonville Road was promised he would be hooked up to public water as a precaution while Flying Heels would not be.

Ostrauskas said the situations are far different.

"Mr. Tyndall lives right next to homes that have contamination levels well above federal standards," he said.